



SORN FACT SHEET

Summary of Supermarket Organics Recycling Network (SORN)

Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (MassDEP)
August 24, 2005

In the *Beyond 2000 Solid Waste Master Plan*, the MassDEP identified food waste diversion as a priority focus area for waste reduction. MassDEP estimates that commercial food waste represents approximately 19% of the total commercial waste stream, and less than 10% of the nearly 900,000 tons of commercial food waste generated each year in the state is diverted.

MassDEP has identified supermarkets as a major organics generator – with over 400 supermarkets in the state generating an estimated 90,600 tons of organic material per year. Waste disposal represents a significant and increasing operating cost for this industry, especially in Massachusetts where disposal fees range from \$80-\$100 per ton. Supermarkets are recognized as a retail sector with extremely slim profit margins and because 75-85% of their waste stream is biodegradable, composting can be a lower cost alternative to disposal.

As of August 2005, there are 62 supermarkets diverting organics in five supermarket chains: Big Y, Roche Bros., Shaw's, Stop & Shop, and Whole Foods supermarkets. These chains own 277 stores combined. On average the supermarkets are saving an estimated \$3,000 - \$20,000 per store by diverting organics only.

Store With Composting Program - Status as of 8/2005

Participating Supermarket Chains	# MA Locations	# of Stores w/ Programs	# of Stores in Development
Big Y	29	8	7
Roche Bros. / Sudbury Farms	17	14	1
Stop & Shop	123	23	0
Shaw's / Star	92	9	5
Whole Foods	16	8	1
Total	277	62	14

The MassDEP and the Massachusetts Food Association (MFA) have worked cooperatively to develop a new *Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for Enhancing Recycling in Supermarkets in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts*, which was signed on August 24, 2005. The MOU expresses the combined commitment of both parties to advance organics and other recycling in Massachusetts. Some of the elements of the MOU include:

- MassDEP will develop a voluntary supermarket recycling program certification to provide annual regulatory relief to individual stores from comprehensive waste ban inspections in exchange for certifying they have certain recycling programs in place. This is a "beyond compliance" program.

Roche Bros. Pilot
The Roche Bros. pilot demonstrated significant waste reduction and financial savings using a dedicated organics compactor program.

Results estimated:

- 5-10 tons of material diverted per week/per store
- \$10,000-\$20,000 savings per store

- Provide tools to jump-start and expand programs, including: supermarket-composting manual, list of haulers and composters, technical assistance for training and store program development.
- Publicize program and results.
- Work together to identify solutions for the growth of organics and other recycling in the supermarket industry.

The MassDEP and MFA have received state and national recognition for this program. In October 2005 MassDEP and MFA received a Worcester Business Journal/ Massachusetts Audubon Society Award for environmental achievements. MassDEP has also received two US Environmental Protection Agency grants to continue this project and worked closely with the agency to identify ways to replicate program nationally.

Brief History of Program:

MassDEP has worked closely with the supermarket industry since 1996 to develop cost-effective diversion programs. The following is a brief summary of work to date:

1996 – 2002: Technical Assistance to Supermarkets in Western Mass and Cape Cod.

- Partners: MassDEP and CET.
- Results: Organics diversion program in 15 Stop & Shop and 4 Big Y stores.

2002: Supermarket Recycling Organic Initiative (SROI).

- Partners: MassDEP, MFA, and WasteCap of Massachusetts.
- Results:
 - Published step-by-step guide for supermarket industry titled *Recycling Organics Initiative – A Handbook for Supermarket Program Managers*.
 - Engaged supermarket upper management in discussions regarding store organics recycling implementation.
 - Provided start-up and technical assistance at four Roche Bros. supermarkets. This chain has since grown its organics program to include thirteen of its sixteen stores.

2003-2006: Supermarket Organics Recycling Network (SORN).

- Partners: MassDEP, MFA, and consultants.
- Results to date:
 - Gathered baseline information on existing MA supermarket composting programs: fifty-four stores generate approximately 53,300 tons of total waste annually and of this amount, 26,200 tons is recycled cardboard; 8,900 tons is source-separated organics sent to composting facilities; and 18,200 tons is disposed of as trash. The total percentage recycled is 65.9% of the total waste stream from these supermarkets.
 - Provided program expansion recommendations to supermarket chains and identified new chains for inclusion.
 - Recognized 6 supermarket chains with MA WasteWise Supermarket Recycling Leadership Awards.
 - Signed MOU for *Enhancing Recycling in Supermarkets in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts*.

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